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ABSTRACT

The AFS Impact Study, initiated in 1977, is an attempt to document changes in learning and personal development associated with an intercultural "homestay" program. Completed in 1985, the study identifies several areas in which students show greater learning and educational growth than that shown by a group of students who had expressed interest in an exchange experience but were unable to participate in one. The study, based on questionnaires used in pre- and post-testing environments, examines and compares growth in intercultural knowledge and sensitivity, awareness of global issues, and interpersonal relationships. The research also identifies the development of and changes in personal values and skills among participants and non-participants in terms of awareness of opportunities, non-materialism, critical thinking, exchange of ideas, independence, personal growth and maturity, and self-confidence. In addition, the report documents the differences in learning patterns between full-year program students and short program students. Research indicates that the most distinguishing characteristic of this program in terms of learning and development is a student's emotional involvement with a different culture, along with significant increases in altruism and idealism. Tables are included. (JHP)

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# RESEARCH REPORTS

JULY
1986

# THE A F S IMPACT STUDY: FINAL REPORT

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RESEARCH REPORT **33**

**The Research Department. AFS International/Intercultural Programs, Inc.**

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The mission of the AFS Research Department is to . . .

- carry out research and evaluation projects that potentially will lead to increased understanding of the nature and impact of AFS exchanges, to improved implementation of AFS programs and operations, and/or to enhanced intercultural learning by AFS participants;

- collect and develop innovative cross-cultural orientation materials and procedures that potentially will improve the quality of the learning experience associated with participation in an AFS program;

- maintain contact with members of the scholarly, educational, and professional communities around the world who are interested in international and intercultural exchange of persons; and

- serve as a consultant to members of the worldwide AFS community with respect to research and evaluation, orientation and training, and other activities as may be appropriate.

# THE A F S IMPACT STUDY: FINAL REPORT

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July 1986

## Introduction

In the past, the benefits to adolescents of an AFS experience were explained and defended solely by means of anecdotal evidence. The AFS Impact Study, initiated in 1977, was a careful attempt to document the changes in learning and personal development that are associated with an intercultural homestay. Completed in 1985, the Impact Study identified several personal characteristics or "outcomes" in which AFS students show substantially greater learning and growth than that shown by a group of students who had expressed interest in an exchange experience but were unable to participate in a homestay abroad. The Impact Study highlighted educational aspects of AFS programs that are unlikely to be available to any adolescent who remains at home.

While the initial results of this study were being reported within AFS, other members of the worldwide AFS community were participating in a discussion and evaluation of AFS goals as an educational program. During the February 1984 "Workshop on Intercultural Learning Content and Quality Standards," AFS staff members and volunteers from around the world agreed on the following statement:

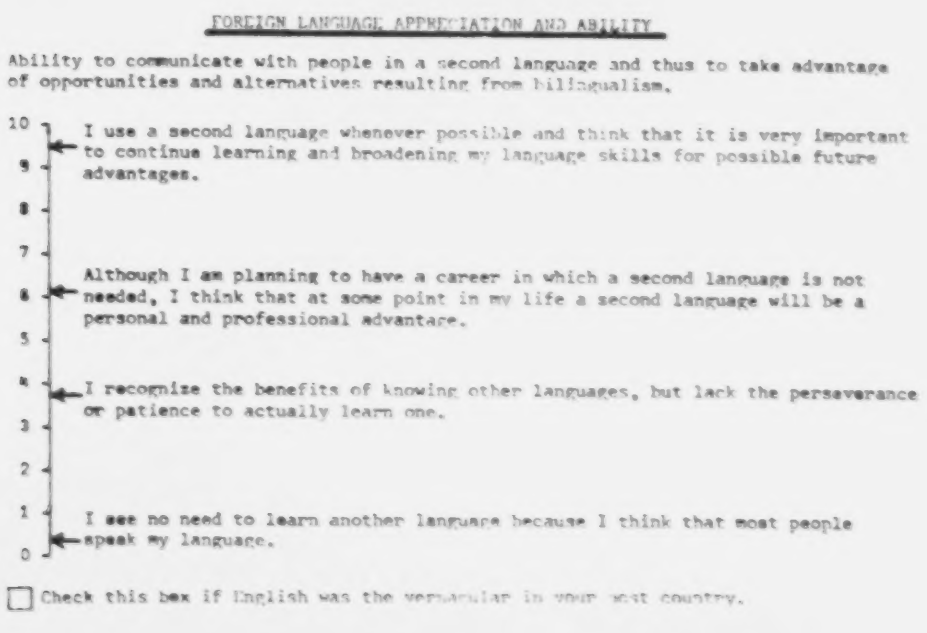
> AFS is committed to intercultural learning. Through AFS programs of all types, people are removed temporarily from their home environments and introduced to differing values, ways of life, and patterns of thought in completely new environments. This experience enables AFS participants to acquire skills, attitudes, and knowledge useful throughout their lives as they attempt to cope sensitively and intelligently with the urgent challenges of the world of tomorrow. . . . Learning through an AFS experience involves growth and change in terms of personal values and skills, interpersonal relationship-building, intercultural knowledge and sensitivity, and global issues-awareness.

This statement underscores the fact that AFS strives to provide **educational** programs for its participants. The findings of the Impact Study enable us to understand much better than ever before how well this goal is achieved in the case of the average adolescent AFS participant.

## Description of the Impact Study

In 1977, AFS began a project to assess the impact of an AFS experience on participants. With the help of consultant Michael Tucker, AFS staff members planned a questionnaire that would be a highly reliable measure of personal growth and learning, yet understandable by students at the high school level. A technique for creating such a questionnaire was found in the retranslation method developed by Smith and Kendall in 1963.[1] As adapted to suit the needs of this project, the retranslation technique required extensive consultation with recent returnees. Some 75 AFS returnees in the U.S., Latin America, and Europe were asked (1) to define personal characteristics they believed to have changed as a result of their AFS experience, and (2) to develop descriptions of behaviors demonstrating high, moderate, and low levels of those personal characteristics. After being subjected to a selection process involving complex statistical procedures, these student-developed definitions and descriptions became the basis for the questionnaire. This phase of the project required more than two years to complete; it involved face-to-face contact with the 75 returnees, a verification procedure in which information was gathered by mail from some 800 returnees, and a pilot test of the draft questionnaire involving nearly 300 returnees.

The result of all this preliminary work was a carefully designed questionnaire, suitable for both pre- and post-test use, that measured seventeen characteristics that the returnees consistently had viewed as outcomes of their AFS experiences. Each characteristic was illustrated by a "Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale" (or "BARS") on which three, four, or five numeric values were linked by an arrow with behavioral anchors, that is, with descriptions of specific behaviors. The students were instructed to rate themselves by checking the scale at any point. An example of one of the seventeen questionnaire items appears below:


FOREIGN LANGUAGE APPRECIATION AND ABILITY
Ability to communicate with people in a second language and thus to take advantage of opportunities and alternatives resulting from bilingualism.
10
I use a second language whenever possible and think that it is very important to continue learning and broadening my language skills for possible future advantages.
9
8
7
Although I am planning to have a career in which a second language is not needed, I think that at some point in my life a second language will be a personal and professional advantage.
6
5
I recognize the benefits of knowing other languages, but lack the perseverance or patience to actually learn one.
4
3
2
1
I see no need to learn another language because I think that most people speak my language.
0
Check this box if English was the vernacular in your host country.

A second part of the Impact questionnaire required far less effort to develop. This part, used only on the post-test questionnaire, simply asked the respondent to check one of five numbers to indicate the extent to which his or her life had changed (with respect to each outcome) since the pre-test questionnaire had been administered. The possible responses were (1) not at all, (2) to a little extent, (3) to some extent, (4) to a great extent, and (5) to a very great extent.

In order to measure learning or change, one must administer BARS-type questionnaire items on two occasions: once before the subjects receive the "treatment" -- in this case, the treatment is an intercultural homestay abroad under AFS auspices -- and a second time after the subjects have received the treatment. In addition, it is necessary to give the same questionnaire items to other people, similar to the subjects in as many ways as possible, who do not receive the treatment; these other people constitute a "comparison group." In this way, the effects of the treatment can be isolated from the normal changes in growth and development that would be experienced by the subjects in any case. This is the procedure that was employed in the AFS Impact Study.

In January of 1981, the AFS Research Department sent pre-test questionnaires to the more than 4300 U.S. high school students who had applied for the 1981-82 AFS programs. About 2500 pre-test questionnaires were returned. Most of the applicants that year eventually participated in AFS Year or Short Programs, but close to 1000 of them either withdrew, were not placed, or were rejected for AFS. The applicants who did not become AFS students made up the comparison group. A few months after returning to the United States following their Year or Short Programs, the AFS students received a post-test questionnaire on which the seventeen BARS were identical to those on the pre-test. The students in the comparison group were divided arbitrarily into two subgroups. Students in one subgroup received post-test questionnaires simultaneously with AFS Year Program students who had been to the Northern Hemisphere; those in the other subgroup received post-test questionnaires simultaneously with AFS Year Program students who had been hosted in the Southern Hemisphere. (Students sent to the two hemispheres depart and return at different times during the year.)

In this study, the response rate for the AFS students was about 33% and the rate for the comparison group was 16%. These rates were lower than was hoped for, especially in the case of the comparison group. However, because the initial pool of applicants was so large, there were still over 1100 AFS students and 160 comparison group students who responded to both pre- and post-tests.

To measure the extent to which respondents changed from pre- to post-test, the pre-test score for each respondent was subtracted from his or her post-test score on each of the seventeen items. This difference is referred to as the "change score" for each respondent. A positive change score is assumed to represent learning or growth, while a negative change score can be interpreted as regression or decline in the characteristic measured. These scores are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Self-Rating Scores on Seventeen Characteristics for Year Program, Short Program, and Comparison Group Respondents: Average Pre-test and Post-test Scores and Average Change (See Note 1, page 30)

| Characteristic | | Average Pre-test Score | Average Post-test Score | Average Amount of Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Awareness of Opportunities: | [n] | | | |
| Short Program Students | [793] | 70.3 | 76.7 | 6.4 |
| Year Program Students | [323] | 71.6 | 76.9 | 5.2 |
| Comparison Group | [160] | 69.7 | 73.1 | 3.3 |
| Adaptability: | | | | |
| Short Program Students | | 77.6 | 84.3 | 6.7 |
| Year Program Students | | 78.3 | 83.2 | 4.9 |
| Comparison Group | | 77.6 | 78.7 | 1.1 |
| Non-Materialism: | | | | |
| Short Program Students | | 82.9 | 86.1 | 3.2 |
| Year Program Students | | 82.7 | 86.4 | 3.5 |
| Comparison Group | | 81.1 | 80.4 | -0.9 |
| Communication with Others: | | | | |
| Short Program Students | | 82.9 | 86.8 | 4.0 |
| Year Program Students | | 81.5 | 86.3 | 4.9 |
| Comparison Group | | 82.7 | 85.8 | 2.9 |
| Critical Thinking: | | | | |
| Short Program Students | | 69.3 | 74.1 | 4.6 |
| Year Program Students | | 71.2 | 75.4 | 4.3 |
| Comparison Group | | 69.3 | 71.6 | 2.1 |
| Understanding Other Cultures: | | | | |
| Short Program Students | | 72.0 | 79.0 | 6.9 |
| Year Program Students | | 74.1 | 80.4 | 6.3 |
| Comparison Group | | 70.4 | 73.2 | 2.7 |
| Exchange of Ideas: | | | | |
| Short Program Students | | 75.1 | 78.3 | 3.3 |
| Year Program Students | | 74.3 | 79.6 | 5.2 |
| Comparison Group | | 73.9 | 77.0 | 3.1 |
| High Standards for Personal Relationships: | | | | |
| Short Program Students | | 80.5 | 83.7 | 3.2 |
| Year Program Students | | 79.9 | 82.4 | 2.4 |
| Comparison Group | | 82.0 | 83.0 | 1.1 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Independence--Responsibility for Self: | | | |
| Short Program Students | 81.9 | 84.5 | 2.5 |
| Year Program Students | 81.9 | 85.2 | 3.3 |
| Comparison Group | 82.6 | 83.1 | 0.6 |
| Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability: | | | |
| Short Program Students | 72.7 | 82.5 | 9.7 |
| Year Program Students | 74.9 | 90.3 | 15.1 |
| Comparison Group | 74.1 | 73.0 | -1.1 |
| Personal Growth and Maturity: | | | |
| Short Program Students | 75.2 | 78.5 | 3.3 |
| Year Program Students | 74.5 | 77.8 | 3.3 |
| Comparison Group | 73.3 | 75.7 | 2.4 |
| Awareness and Appreciation of Home Country and Culture: | | | |
| Short Program Students | 80.8 | 84.2 | 3.3 |
| Year Program Students | 81.2 | 83.8 | 2.6 |
| Comparison Group | 79.8 | 79.9 | 0.1 |
| Appreciation of Own Family: | | | |
| Short Program Students | 81.5 | 82.7 | 1.1 |
| Year Program Students | 79.6 | 84.3 | 4.7 |
| Comparison Group | 80.4 | 82.3 | 1.5 |
| Awareness and Appreciation of Host Country and Culture: | | | |
| Short Program Students | 64.2 | 78.1 | 13.8 |
| Year Program Students | 62.9 | 79.8 | 16.9 |
| Comparison Group | 64.9 | 63.9 | -1.0 |
| International Awareness: | | | |
| Short Program Students | 69.0 | 76.6 | 7.5 |
| Year Program Students | 73.0 | 78.7 | 5.7 |
| Comparison Group | 68.5 | 68.9 | 0.2 |
| Open-Mindedness: | | | |
| Short Program Students | 83.6 | 87.0 | 3.4 |
| Year Program Students | 84.4 | 87.2 | 2.8 |
| Comparison Group | 83.1 | 84.5 | 1.4 |
| Self-Confidence: | | | |
| Short Program Students | 76.5 | 80.4 | 3.9 |
| Year Program Students | 75.1 | 79.8 | 4.7 |
| Comparison Group | 74.3 | 78.5 | 4.2 |

Note that the respondents tended to give themselves high pre-test ratings on such items as Open-Mindedness, Independence--Responsibility for Self, Communication with Others, and Non-Materialism. They gave themselves much lower pre-test ratings on such items as Awareness and Appreciation of Host Country and Culture, Critical Thinking, Awareness of Opportunities, and International Awareness. With respect to pre- to post-test changes, the greatest amount of positive change is found among Year Program students in Awareness and Appreciation of Host Country and Culture, and in Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability. Short Program students are not far behind in these categories. The least amount of change is found for comparison group students in Awareness and Appreciation of Home Country and Culture, International Awareness, Independence--Responsibility for Self, and Non-Materialism. **Decreases** of more than one point are found among comparison group students in Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability, and Awareness and Appreciation of Host Country and Culture (defined as the country the student had hoped to visit). For Short Program students, the smallest increase is in Appreciation of Own Family; Year Program students show an increase of nearly five points in this category.

**The Influence of Previous Travel Experience**

In the pre-test, the applicants were asked about the extent of their previous travel experience, using the following scale:

- I have never traveled more than 200 or 300 miles from my home community.
- I have traveled only within the fifty states and/or the Canadian provinces.
- I have made only one or two brief tours of nations outside the U.S. and Canada.
- I have made several extensive tours of nations outside the U.S. and Canada.
- I have actually lived in a community (not in a hotel) in a foreign nation for from three to nine weeks.
- I have actually lived in a community (not in a hotel) in a foreign nation for more than nine weeks.
- I have actually attended (not merely visited) school in a foreign nation.

While most of the students who applied for AFS programs had not traveled outside of the U.S. and Canada, some 40% had been abroad at least once. If travel generally affects an adolescent's learning and development in the seventeen characteristics measured in this study, then the different levels of prior travel experience that the students

brought with them should be reflected in their pre-test scores for these same characteristics.

For five of the variables measured in this study -- Awareness of Opportunities, Adaptability, Understanding Other Cultures, Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability, and International Awareness -- students with greater previous travel experience tend generally to have higher pre-test scores. A one-way analysis of variance shows a significant between-groups difference in pre-test scores for these variables. Two other variables -- Critical Thinking, and Open-Mindedness -- also show a significant positive linear relationship between previous travel and pre-test score even though the analysis of variance does not show significant difference between the groups.

Prior travel experience also seems to decrease the amount of change that can be measured for these students. For Adaptability, Understanding Other Cultures, Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability, and International Awareness, an inverse relationship is found between extent of previous travel and amount of change shown by the respondents in that characteristic. The explanation for this relationship is this: The higher the pre-test score, the less "room" remains for upward movement on a scale whose highest value is fixed at 100.

The relationship that seems to exist between prior travel experience and scores on the Impact questionnaire suggests that the characteristics measured by the questionnaire are indeed those that may increase because of learning gained through travel. Yet because of this, the fact that many of the respondents had already experienced some travel abroad makes the analysis of the data more complicated. The effect of a foreign travel experience that the student had prior to applying for AFS must be separated from the effect of the AFS travel experience.

**The Effects of Other Demographic Variables**

The Impact pre-test questionnaire collected some demographic information about the respondents to determine what effect, if any, demographic characteristics might have on the responses. In this study, statistical testing revealed several characteristics for which there were significant differences between the male and female applicants. Females generally scored significantly higher than males in Adaptability, Appreciation of Own Family, Communication with Others, High Standards for Personal Relationships, and Non-Materialism. Males, on the other hand, show a significantly higher average score than females in Exchange of Ideas. It is important in this context to remember that these scores were obtained from self-ratings. Apparent differences between male and female applicants may reflect differences in how these people view themselves. Self-ratings of this type are likely to be influenced by socialization patterns and instilled values. For example, females have been encouraged to value family life, social skills, and ideals more than males have, and males perhaps have been encouraged to value intellectual discussion more than females.

The composition of the students' natural families also was found to have some relation to scores on the Impact questionnaire. Some 83% of the respondents in this study reported that they were members of a two-parent family. Almost all applicants reported having siblings. Some 41% of them reported having three or more siblings, and nearly 30% had two siblings. Only 3% had no siblings. While less than 20% of the applicants came from single-parent families, it was possible to find that, for two of the Impact characteristics -- Critical Thinking, and Self-Confidence -- respondents from single-parent families show significantly higher pre-test scores. For all other variables, no differences were found between respondents from two-parent and from one-parent families. Because only 43 of the applicants were "only children," it is difficult to have much confidence in statistical tests that compare the pre-test scores of these students with those of the hundreds of other students with one or more siblings. However, analyses of variance conducted on pre-test scores for each characteristic show that in many cases, the number of siblings in a family does affect the student's self-rating; by and large, the "only children" have the highest pre-test scores while those from large families have lower scores. Variables that seem most affected on the pre-test by the number of siblings in the family include Awareness of Opportunities, Understanding Other Cultures, Exchange of Ideas, Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability, Awareness and Appreciation of Host Country and Culture, and International Awareness.

**Differences Based on AFS Selection for Host Country**

A homestay experience in one country may have a different impact on a person than a homestay experience in another country. On the other hand, it cannot be assumed that students heading for Japan, for example, are similar to those sent to France. For this reason it is appropriate to examine the differences in pre-test scores for the students sent to different parts of the world.

The U.S. students who apply for AFS do not necessarily choose the country to which they will be sent. Students may express interest in a particular country or a particular part of the world. These preferences are accommodated as frequently as possible. Applicants are also asked if there are any countries to which they would not like to be sent, and these wishes are always respected. Otherwise, AFS reserves the right to select the country as well as the host family placement for each student. These placement decisions are based on AFS's assessment of the candidate's needs and strengths, and on its knowledge of the types of family and school situations available in the various countries. Because the selection of students for the host country placements is not random, it is important to determine what differences may exist in the students prior to their being sent to different parts of the world.

To do this, the average pre-test scores of Year and Short Program students were broken down by the region of the world in which they were eventually hosted. The pre-test scores of the students being sent to

different regions were found to vary in some characteristics. Students headed for English-speaking countries had significantly lower average pre-test scores in their Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability than most other students, and those heading for Latin America were more likely to have higher pre-test scores in this category. Students heading for Asia showed higher average pre-test scores in Understanding Other Cultures than other students, while those headed for Mexico or Central America had the lowest average pre-test scores for this characteristic. Asia-bound students and those going to Moslem countries showed higher pre-test levels of International Awareness than those going elsewhere, while students sent to South America had the lowest average pre-test scores in this variable. Finally, with respect to the characteristic Personal Growth and Maturity, students sent to Southern Europe generally showed higher average pre-test scores while the scores of those bound for South America were significantly lower.

The differences in pre-test scores seem to reflect some criteria for selection of students for specific continents or cultural regions. For example, AFS applicants are asked about any foreign languages they can speak and must rate their reading and speaking ability in these languages on the application form. U.S. students with limited ability in a foreign language (and, presumably, with limited appreciation of the value of learning a foreign language) are more likely to choose, and be selected for, programs in countries where English is spoken. Students who are going to Asian countries need to have a strong interest in learning about other cultures and an ability to accept and appreciate the differences between cultures. These attributes are related to Understanding Other Cultures. International Awareness may also be critical for students going to Asia or for those going to Moslem countries. Students whose applications displayed an interest in and understanding of other cultures and a concern for people in other countries may have been selected for programs in Asian or Moslem countries more often than other students. They may also have expressed more of an interest in these countries themselves. The tendency for students headed for Southern Europe to show greater pre-test levels of Personal Growth and Maturity, and for those going to Latin America to show lower levels of this characteristic, is not related to any conscious selection criteria for these world regions.

The amount of change the students report also varies by the region of the world in which they were hosted. Not surprisingly, AFS students in non-English speaking regions of the world show a greater increase in Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability than those who spent their sojourn in an English-speaking country. Students who went to South America show significantly more growth in International Awareness than those who went to English-speaking countries or to Southern Europe. In other areas, new patterns were found. Students to Scandinavian countries, for example, show a significantly higher increase in High Standards for Personal Relationships than students who went to English-speaking countries. Students who went to Asia show a significantly greater increase in Adaptability than those who went to Western Europe.

While there are several factors that seem to have some bearing on the way in which students rate themselves prior to applying for AFS, in most cases these factors do not seem to have much bearing on the amount of change students experience from pre- to post-test. Only one variable, the extent of previous travel, shows a consistent pattern of influence in relation to several of the seventeen characteristics measured in this study. This finding alone seems to lend support to the hypothesis that, with respect to the characteristics studied, travel abroad has a positive impact on an individual. The variable devised to measure the extent of previous travel is ordinal, making it possible to control for this variable in ways that are not possible with nominal variables, such as region of the world in which the student is hosted.

Several statistical procedures were used to evaluate the findings for each characteristic. In one way or another, these tests took into account the effect of previous travel so that these effects would not distort the results. (A discussion of the statistical procedures used is found in my Ph.D. dissertation, which concerns the Impact Study.[2])

An analysis of all responses to all seventeen questionnaire items shows that respondents generally considered each item separately. They were not inclined to give themselves uniform ratings across several items, which suggests that each item measures a unique characteristic.

The characteristics measured by the Impact Study are related to the Statement of AFS Educational Content and Learning Objectives (as outlined in the introduction to this report). By relating the seventeen items to specific AFS goals, it is possible to offer an assessment of the extent to which AFS's goals currently are being met.

### Intercultural Knowledge and Sensitivity

The goal for learning that seems most clearly to be achieved by AFS programs is growth in Intercultural Knowledge and Sensitivity. Five characteristics measured in the Impact Study are related to this goal. These are:

Understanding Other Cultures
Open-Mindedness
Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability
Awareness and Appreciation of Home Country and Culture
Awareness and Appreciation of Host Country and Culture

In three of these five variables, AFS students show significantly greater increases than those who did not travel abroad. (In the other two, the difference between AFS students and the comparison group is in the same direction, but does not reach statistical significance.) The average changes are reported in Table 2. As can be seen, the comparison group respondents who did not subsequently go abroad show little average improvement in these areas. In the case of Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability, they show a marked decline.

Table 2. Average Change in Characteristics Related to Intercultural Knowledge and Sensitivity

| GROUP | Change, All Respondents | No Previous Travel Abroad | Previously Abroad |
|---|---|---|---|
| Understanding Other Cultures | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 6.97 | 8.06 | 5.24 |
| AFS Year Program | 6.19 | 8.38 | 3.51 |
| Comparison Group* | 0.92 | 2.76 | -2.44 |
| Open-Mindedness | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 3.42 | 3.82 | 2.78 |
| AFS Year Program | 2.87 | 3.16 | 2.51 |
| Comparison Group* | 0.97 | 2.77 | -2.43 |
| Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 9.71 | 11.42 | 6.99 |
| AFS Year Program | 15.11 | 17.80 | 11.71 |
| Comparison Group* | -4.10 | -2.03 | -7.90 |
| Awareness and Appreciation of Home Country and Culture | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 3.30 | 3.43 | 3.09 |
| AFS Year Program | 2.58 | 2.26 | 3.00 |
| Comparison Group* | -0.13 | -0.88 | 1.22 |
| Awareness and Appreciation of Host Country and Culture | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 13.88 | 14.46 | 12.95 |
| AFS Year Program | 16.86 | 18.10 | 15.35 |
| Comparison Group* | -0.45 | 0.37 | -2.06 |

*All comparison group respondents who did not travel abroad between the pre- and post-tests.

Understanding Other Cultures. One of the primary goals of AFS in sponsoring exchange programs is to provide an experience that will aid young people in understanding other cultures. This characteristic is defined as: "Interest in learning about other peoples and cultures; ability to accept and to appreciate their differences." As this definition indicates, this scale measures motivation to learn about other cultures as well as acceptance of other cultures, rather than the possession of factual information. Among those with no prior travel abroad experience, AFS students on both Short and Year programs show

significantly greater average increases in Understanding Other Cultures than the comparison group respondents. Among students who had traveled prior to applying for AFS, comparison group respondents show a decrease in this category. For these students, significant differences can be found between Short Program and comparison group respondents, though the differences between Year Program and comparison group respondents are not large enough to be statistically significant. In general, the results suggest that the findings from this sample are likely to reflect actual differences between the AFS exchange students and those who do not go abroad.

In addition, nearly 85% of the AFS students said that their lives had changed "to a great extent" or "to a very great extent" with respect to Understanding Other Cultures, while under 40% of the comparison group rated themselves in this way. Results for respondents are similar regardless of whether or not they had traveled abroad before applying to AFS. The data from this study, then, lend support to the hypothesis that a travel abroad experience such as AFS leads to increased Understanding of Other Cultures.

Awareness and Appreciation of Host Country and Culture. Probably the most obvious objective of an AFS sojourn in another country is to learn about that country and its people. One would anticipate, then, that AFS students who spent a few months or, particularly, a year living abroad would show marked increases in this characteristic. The definition of Awareness and Appreciation of Host Country and Culture is as follows: "Considerable knowledge of the people and culture of my host country, and an understanding of that country's role in world affairs." Responses to this particular questionnaire item differ from the other items in several ways. Average pre-test scores on this item were lower than for any other on the Impact questionnaire. It is also the only item that asks respondents to assess the extent of knowledge or factual information they possess about a specific subject.

Although the pre-test scores on this item may measure a student's knowledge of a country other than the one to which he or she eventually was sent, the pre- to post-test change in Awareness and Appreciation of Host Country and Culture is exceedingly high for the AFS students, while no change is recorded for students who did not have a chance to go abroad. (On the post-test, comparison group students rated themselves with respect to the country they had hoped to visit.) While this difference comes as no surprise, it is important to remember that comparison group respondents were interested in going abroad to learn about another country and culture, and could have increased their knowledge of that country through books and classroom learning.

While it seemed certain that the increases shown by both Short and Year Program students would prove to be significantly higher than that shown by the comparison group on this variable, it was necessary to confirm the expectation that Year Program students would show a significantly greater increase than Short Program students. When respondents who had been abroad previously are considered, the Year Program students do not show a significantly greater increase than that of the Short

Program students, although both show significantly greater increases than the comparison group. However, among those who had never been abroad prior to their AFS experience, statistical tests show that Year Program students increased significantly more than those who participated in the Short Program. About half (51.1%) of all AFS participants reported that their lives had changed "to a very great extent" with respect to their Awareness and Appreciation of Host Country and Culture, while 11.7% of the comparison group responded this way.

Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability. Increased ability in a foreign language is perhaps the most observable effect of living in another country. Language may be most easily learned through experience; AFS students must use the language of the host country in order to communicate with their host families and others they meet while abroad. This characteristic is defined as: "Ability to communicate with people in a second language and thus to take advantage of opportunities and alternatives resulting from bilingualism." While it might have been possible to find an objective test of AFS and comparison group respondents' language facility, the variable here also concerns attitude toward foreign language learning. The behavioral anchors show clearly how attitude is even more important than actual facility in this characteristic. Following are the four anchors for this item:

(95 points) "I use a second language whenever possible and think that it is very important to continue learning and broadening my language skills for possible future advantages."

(60 points) "Although I am planning to have a career in which a second language is not needed, I think that at some point in my life a second language will be a personal and professional advantage."

(38 points) "I recognize the benefits of knowing other languages, but lack the perseverance or patience to actually learn one."

(2 points) "I see no need to learn another language because I think that most people speak my language."

AFS Year Program students show the largest increase in Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability, followed by Short Program students, while those who did not go abroad on an AFS program show a moderate decrease in this characteristic. All these differences are highly significant. As suggested previously, these differences do not mean merely that AFS returnees have a greater language facility (nor do they mean that the comparison group respondents have quickly lost whatever language ability they had prior to applying for AFS); these differences mean that the respondents' **attitudes** about other languages have been altered. Immersion in a foreign culture has altered the world view of the AFS students; by experiencing the need to communicate in another language, they have come to recognize language as an important tool and language learning as a worthwhile effort.

Over 45% of all AFS participants (and over 56% of all Year Program students) reported that their lives had changed "to a very great extent" with respect to their Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability, while about 16% of the comparison group reported this much change. Year Program students reported the most change, and comparison group students the least. This generalization is valid for those who had been abroad previously as well as for those who had not.

There seems to be little question that this characteristic is strongly related to travel abroad. Students who had traveled abroad previously show higher pre-test scores than those who had not. And AFS students clearly show much greater increases in this variable than those in the comparison group. While it is possible to learn a language in a classroom, it is not easy to teach students to value foreign languages in the classroom.

Open-Mindedness. While Open-Mindedness was seen as an outcome of the experience abroad, the applicants in the sample for this study apparently saw themselves as very open-minded to begin with. At over 83 points, this variable had the highest average pre-test score. This high pre-test score seriously limited the potential for significant upward movement in Open-Mindedness.

Open-Mindedness is defined as: "A capacity to appreciate different attitudes, opinions, values, and lifestyles, and to accept people from different backgrounds." Three anchor statements are given for this scale, ranging from 7 points ("I believe the way I was brought up is right for everyone.") to 91 points ("I do not degrade other people's beliefs even though their personal opinions are very different from my own."). This scale, like all the others, was verified by hundreds of AFS returnees. However, the high level anchor in this case seems to be one that students feel is particulary easy to attain. In addition, the "middle" anchor ("I am interested in people with different lifestyles, yet when I encounter someone who is very different I immediately label him as 'strange' instead of trying to understand why the difference exists.") marks 27 points, meaning that there is a large gap between the top and middle anchors. These factors create some problems in this particular scale, yet there is no compelling reason to doubt that it is a fair representation of Open-Mindedness as seen by 18-year-olds.

Comparison group students show very little increase on the average in Open-Mindedness, while AFS students display a small to moderate increase. The difference between them is not great enough to be statistically significant, except in the case of students who had been abroad previously. AFS students who had been abroad previously show significantly greater increases in Open-Mindedness than the comparison group students who also had been abroad prior to applying to AFS. The significant difference between the two AFS groups and the comparison group is a function of the decline in this characteristic among the 40 students in the comparison group who had been abroad before. These 40 students demonstrated a similar pattern in a few of the other characteristics measured here; this pattern seems to be based on the attitudes of these particular students and probably is not a finding relevant to this

study. The fact that the 75 other comparison group students show an increase similar to that of the AFS students suggests that the AFS experience alone cannot be responsible for the small to moderate increases found in Open-Mindedness.

In terms of the respondents' own assessments of the extent to which they had changed in their Open-Mindedness, it seems that, among the respondents who had never been abroad previously, the Short Program students see themselves as changing to a greater extent than do the comparison group respondents. Otherwise, the differences are not significant.

Awareness and Appreciation of Home Country and Culture. The experience of traveling abroad and immersing oneself in another country may allow one to come to an understanding of his or her own culture. The returnees who wrote the definition for this characteristic felt that they had come to a greater understanding of their respective countries as a result of living abroad. They defined Awareness and Appreciation of Home Country and Culture as follows: "An understanding of the positive and negative aspects of my **native** country, and of its role in world affairs."

The differences shown for Awareness and Appreciation of Home Country and Culture generally are not significant. Statistical tests found only one contrast showing a significant difference between the mean change scores of two groups. Among those who had not traveled previously, AFS students show significantly greater improvement in this characteristic than comparison group students. However, in their own assessment of the extent to which their lives had changed in this respect, AFS students in all categories were much more likely to report that their lives had changed "to a great extent" or "to a very great extent" in this characteristic, while the average comparison group response fell below the rating "to some extent." This suggests that, regardless of the lack of any significant difference in their change scores from pre- to post-test, AFS students generally believe that an increased awareness and appreciation of their home country and culture is an outcome of their AFS experience.

## Global Issues Awareness

AFS anticipates that its students will return from their homestay abroad with a much better understanding of world affairs and global problems. While the variables related to Intercultural Knowledge and Sensitivity are somewhat relevant, only one variable from the Impact Study is related exclusively to this goal: International Awareness.

International Awareness. The AFS returnees who participated in the development of the Impact questionnaire felt that an intercultural homestay such as they had had helps to break down ethnocentrism and parochial vision. They cited International Awareness as an outcome of the AFS experience, and defined this characteristic as: "An under-

standing that the world is one community; a capacity to empathize with people in other countries; an appreciation of the common needs and concerns of people of different cultures." In theory, it does not take a trip abroad for a person to become interested in international events, nor to understand that people in various parts of the world have common needs. However, among the adolescents who responded to the Impact questionnaire, those who did not participate in AFS programs show no increase in International Awareness, while those on AFS programs show marked average increases in this item. The change scores for this variable are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Average Change in International Awareness for AFS Short Program, AFS Year Program, and Comparison Group Respondents

| GROUP | Change, All Respondents | No Previous Travel Abroad | Previously Abroad |
|---|---|---|---|
| International Awareness | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 7.53 | 7.78 | 7.13 |
| AFS Year Program | 5.72 | 8.01 | 2.90 |
| Comparison Group* | -1.18 | -0.15 | -3.13 |

*All comparison group respondents who did not travel abroad between the pre- and post-tests.

Previous travel seems to have a significant bearing on the amount of change reported in this variable, as it does in a number of other cases. Students who had been abroad previously seemed likely to have higher pre-test scores and lower change scores than those with no prior travel-abroad experience. This generalization is especially true for Year Program students. Year Program students with prior travel experience show less than three points increase, while those who had not been abroad before show an increase of eight points. In the comparison group, students who had been abroad show more of a decline than those who had never traveled, but this difference is small enough that it could have occurred because of chance factors.

Short Program students and Year Program students who had no previous travel-abroad experience all show significantly greater average increases in International Awareness than their comparison group counterparts. This finding does not hold for Year Program students who had been abroad previously; it is not entirely clear why this should be the case. Students with previous travel experience generally had higher pre-test scores, but this fact did not seem to affect the post-test scores of the Short Program students to anywhere near the degree it seems to have affected both Year Program and comparison group students.

When the respondents evaluated the extent to which their lives had changed with respect to International Awareness, some two-thirds of the AFS participants reported that their lives had changed "to a great extent" or "to a very great extent" compared with slightly more than one-third of the students in the comparison group who selected these responses. AFS students' scores on this part are consistently higher than those of the comparison group, regardless of the extent of previous travel.

**Interpersonal Relationship-Building**

A current marketing slogan for AFS is "Turning Places Into People." AFS programs have always striven to build and maintain personal relationships between individuals from different cultures. As discussed in the Statement of AFS Educational Content and Learning Objectives, this goal emphasizes flexibility, empathy, and communication. Several characteristics measured by the Impact Study relate to this goal:

Adaptability
Communication with Others
High Standards for Personal Relationships
Appreciation of Own Family

AFS participants show some average increase in all four of these variables; in the case of Adaptability, they show consistently greater improvement than those who did not go abroad. Adaptability clearly appears to be related to the returnees' AFS homestay abroad. The improvement shown by AFS students in Communication with Others is also considerable, though it is not always significantly greater than that shown by the students who did not go abroad. AFSers' improvement in High Standards for Personal Relationships is notable, too, but not significantly greater than the improvement of non-participants. In the last of these variables, Appreciation of Own Family, the Year Program students show significant increases over both the Short Program and the comparison group students, neither of which shows much change from the pre-test level. The average amount of change in these variables is presented in Table 4.

Adaptability. One of the important skills needed for interpersonal relationship building is Adaptability. Unlike some of the other characteristics explored in this study, Adaptability seems not necessarily to increase as a person matures; older adults may sometimes find it harder to adjust to new circumstances than children and young people. The AFS returnees defined Adaptability as: "Ability to deal flexibly with and adjust to new people, places, and situations; willingness to change behavior patterns and opinions when influenced by others." A high level (87 on a 100-point scale) of Adaptability was illustrated by the phrase, "When I visit friends in other parts of my country, I find that I unconsciously alter my habits and lifestyle to theirs. I enjoy comparing our different ways of doing things." On the other hand, a low level (10 points) of Adaptability was described by

Table 4. Average Change in Characteristics Related to Interpersonal Relationship-Building.

| GROUP | Change, All Respondents | No Previous Travel Abroad | Previously Abroad |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adaptability | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 6.74 | 7.22 | 5.97 |
| AFS Year Program | 4.86 | 4.77 | 4.97 |
| Comparison Group* | 1.28 | 1.73 | .44 |
| Communication with Others | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 3.98 | 3.83 | 4.21 |
| AFS Year Program | 4.90 | 5.44 | 4.24 |
| Comparison Group | 1.93 | 3.92 | -1.66 |
| High Standards for Personal Relationships | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 3.22 | 2.93 | 3.69 |
| AFS Year Program | 2.36 | 1.65 | 3.23 |
| Comparison Group | 2.00 | 2.12 | 1.78 |
| Appreciation of Own Family | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 1.12 | 1.35 | .75 |
| AFS Year Program | 4.67 | 5.42 | 3.74 |
| Comparison Group | 1.70 | 1.78 | 1.56 |

*All comparison group respondents who did not travel abroad between the pre- and post-tests.

this sentence: "I insist on having my own room whenever I travel anywhere, even though this is often an inconvenience to others."

The experience of a sojourn abroad may lead to increased adaptability because, in such circumstances, adaptability is a survival skill. Necessities of everyday existence, such as communicating with others, eating, and bathing require that the sojourner be adaptable. Unlike the tourist on a package tour whose needs for food, shelter, and company are all pre-arranged, the AFS student must adapt to the ways of the host culture in order to have his or her needs met. The fact that AFS students show greater increases in Adaptability than their counterparts in the comparison group suggests that this skill is not something students necessarily possess beforehand, but a skill that can be, and is, developed in the context of an intercultural homestay.

While the statistical tests revealed significant differences between the change scores of the AFS students and those who did not go abroad, the differences between these groups' perceptions of the extent to which they changed in Adaptability is even greater. One-third of all the AFS students reported that their lives had changed "to a very great extent" while less than one-fifth of all comparison group students gave this response.

Interestingly, students on the Short Program show a significantly greater average increase in Adaptability than either the Year Program or the comparison group respondents. If Adaptability increases as a result of the experience of living abroad, one might expect that the longer experience would lead to a greater increase than the shorter one. The data from this study do not support this expectation. Though no additional information is available to explain this surprising finding, some hypotheses can be suggested. The two or three months that the Short Program students spend abroad may all be spent in a process of adjustment to the host culture. At the end of their stay, students may be just beginning to see themselves as people who can adapt to a new environment. Upon their return home, they are faced with re-adjustment. Many of them immediately go to college. Within a brief period of time, then, these students are called upon to adapt repeatedly to new situations. They are likely to see themselves as people who are highly adaptable. The Year Program students, on the other hand, have had a much longer time to adapt to their host country. By the time they return home, the unfamiliar world of the foreign country may have become familiar. The Year Program student also needs to re-adapt to the home country upon returning, but may find the experience more difficult than the average Short Program student. Because Year Program students may not be able to fall back into the familiar patterns of the home country, they may not feel quite as adaptable as do students returning from the shorter program. As one student commented: "Returning home has shocked me to the extent that I have seriously considered leaving the States for good. Americans can be so damned unfeeling." Then, too, the Year Program experience is generally a more trying one than that of the Short Program. Many more students on the Year Program find they need to change host families due to incompatability. Situations to which they could have adapted over a short period of time become unbearable during the course of a year. For all these reasons, Year Program students' assessment of their ability to adapt to new situations may be a more realistic one than that of Short Program students.

Communication with Others. Communication is a social skill essential in relationship building. The definition of Communication with Others on the questionnaire was: "Ability to understand and be understood by others; skill at interacting socially (such as speaking, listening, and observation skills); willingness to accept and share with others." The anchor statements ranged from the self-critical "I talk, talk, talk, but I really say nothing" (at 7 points) to "I try to understand other people not only by listening carefully to what they say, but also by watching their expressions and actions" (at 92 points).

The AFS students show an average increase in this characteristic, and among those who had been abroad previously, this increase is significantly greater than the increase shown by the comparison group respondents. However, among those who had not been abroad previously, the statistical tests show that the apparent differences in the scores between Year Program, Short Program, and comparison group students are small enough to have occurred by chance. In their self-assessment of their growth in this area, the AFS students with no prior experience in a foreign country seemed more likely than the comparison group respondents to believe that they had grown in their Communication with Others. Slightly over 70% of all the AFS participants reported that their lives had changed "to a great extent" or "to a very great extent" while about 58% of the comparison group felt this strongly.

Generally speaking, increases in Communication with Others may be related to the AFS experience, although the results are not consistent. Certainly, the students themselves appear to believe that their increased ability to communicate is a result of the AFS sojourn.

High Standards for Personal Relationships. In discussing what can be learned from an experience in another culture, Gordon Murray suggests that intercultural learning is characterized by the fact that it generally involves an interpersonal relationship.[3] One might assume from this that sojourners in another culture would feel a special need to develop skill in interpersonal relations, and would come to value friendships more than those who remained in the U.S. On the other hand, when psychologist Sidney Werkman studied American adolescents who were living abroad with their own parents (who were employed overseas for extended periods), he found that the young people tended to become more isolated and to develop fewer friends than adolescents who remained in the U.S.[4] However, the data from the Impact Study were not able to confirm any particular relationship between a homestay abroad and changes in this variable. The average increase in High Standards for Personal Relationships for AFS students was not significantly different from that for non-participants.

This characteristic was defined as: "Need for deep, meaningful, and balanced relationships with a few people rather than for superficial relationships with many people." The scale developed for this variable had a total of five anchor statements -- more than for any other scale. The low anchor (17 points) is the statement, "I won't give up old friends, or make changes in myself to meet the needs of new friends." At the top of the scale, two anchors set closely together show a subtle distinction made by the returnees who assisted in the creation of this scale. These anchors read as follows:

> (at 86 points) "I am content to have a few close friends who understand me, and with whom I am very open. I know many people, but demand and give much in personal relationships."

(at 79 points) "I realize that one can't be superficial and wishy-washy in relationships with others. I commit myself to what I believe in and develop deep and productive relationships with a small number of people."

Even in the students' own assessments of the extent to which they had changed in this area, no significant differences were found between AFS students and those who did not go abroad. The increases found in this variable are small, and are more likely to be related to the passage of time than to the presence or absence of an exchange experience.

Appreciation of Own Family. If relationship-building is a goal of AFS programs, certainly the relationships within the participant's own family should be strengthened. The AFS returnees who helped create the Impact questionnaire felt that they had a deeper appreciation of their own families, and recent research by Judith Martin of the University of Minnesota demonstrates that AFS returnees tend to have improved relationships with their parents following their sojourn abroad.[5]

In the Impact study, Appreciation of Own Family was defined as: "Belief in the value of the family as a social institution; appreciation for the care and support received from my natural family; feelings of care and concern for members of my family." While the definition stresses feelings and beliefs, the behavioral anchors concern active participation in family life and work. The highest anchor statement (93 points) reads: "I am concerned about the welfare of my family and do as much as possible to keep it together and working well. I help with chores and participate in family activities." The lowest anchor (12 points) is the statement, "I notice that my mother is working very hard for the whole family, but I never offer to help her."

Neither the comparison group respondents nor the AFS students who went on the Short Program show a notable increase in this characteristic. However, the Year Program students show significantly greater increases than the other two groups, especially if they had not been abroad previously. Though the Short Program seems not to be related to increased Appreciation of Own Family, it may well be that the longer sojourn does help adolescents become more involved in the lives of their natural families upon their return.

**Personal Values and Skills**

Learning through AFS is primarily through experience. Unlike classroom learning, which focuses primarily on the intellectual understanding of facts or ideas, an AFS homestay actively and fully involves the participant in the learning process. Through the course of the homestay, AFS students are confronted repeatedly with unfamiliar situations and new information. Because values and behaviors from the home culture frequently do not fit the circumstances found in the host culture, the student is faced with a series of crises of varying proportions. "Crisis" in this context refers to some type of instability or acute personal difficulty that brings the AFS participant to a point

where a decisive change of some kind must be made. The goal of AFS is not to eliminate the necessity for decisive changes in participants' personal lives, but to support the participants as they work their way through these crises. Since crises compel people to re-evaluate their assumptions and values carefully, the changes brought about by crises may very well be for the better. The value of crises in the learning process is that they very often lead to the development of useful skills and to other types of positive personal development.

These sorts of outcomes were foremost in the minds of the AFS returnees who worked on the development of the Impact questionnaire. Several of the characteristics measured by the Impact Study are personal values and skills. They are:

Awareness of Opportunities
Non-Materialism
Critical Thinking
Exchange of Ideas
Independence--Responsibility for Self
Personal Growth and Maturity
Self-Confidence

AFS students generally show growth in all of these characteristics although their growth is not necessarily significantly greater than that shown by students who had no opportunity to go abroad. The average change scores for these variables are shown in Table 5.

Awareness of Opportunities. Recognizing the availability of a variety of opportunities is important for adolescents. They will be more likely to make optimal choices about life decisions if they are aware of a number of opportunities than if they are afraid to try anything new or feel compelled to take the first opportunity that becomes available to them. Returnees defined Awareness of Opportunities as: "Recognition that a wide range of opportunities is open to me; motivation to respond positively to these opportunities." A low level of opportunity awareness (20 on a 100-point scale) was described by the statement: "I always hesitate when confronted with the opportunity to participate in new experiences." Returnees described a high level of opportunity awareness with this statement: "I strive to keep open to all options and opportunities available to me."

The average change scores on Awareness of Opportunities for both Year and Short Program students are higher than the change score for the comparison group; the difference in both cases is statistically significant. Among only those respondents who had never been abroad, the average change is considerably greater for AFS students than for the students in the comparison group. However, among respondents who had traveled abroad previously, no such difference was found to exist. It seems that changes in this variable are a possible outcome of the AFS sojourn particularly when this is the student's first experience abroad.

Table 5. Average Change in Characteristics Related to Personal Values and Skills

| GROUP | Change, All Respondents | No Previous Travel Abroad | Previously Abroad |
|---|---|---|---|
| Awareness of Opportunities | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 6.51 | 6.73 | 6.16 |
| AFS Year Program | 5.21 | 5.23 | 4.82 |
| Comparison Group* | 2.24 | 1.20 | 4.15 |
| Non-Materialism | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 3.22 | 3.21 | 3.09 |
| AFS Year Program | 3.53 | 3.52 | 3.54 |
| Comparison Group | -1.65 | -2.59 | .07 |
| Critical Thinking | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 4.69 | 5.08 | 4.07 |
| AFS Year Program | 4.52 | 3.95 | 5.24 |
| Comparison Group | 1.92 | -.40 | 6.28 |
| Exchange of Ideas | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 3.31 | 3.11 | 3.65 |
| AFS Year Program | 5.21 | 5.26 | 5.15 |
| Comparison Group | 3.50 | 4.05 | 2.48 |
| Independence--Responsibility for Self | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 2.56 | 2.64 | 2.44 |
| AFS Year Program | 3.24 | 4.73 | 1.38 |
| Comparison Group | -.09 | -.64 | .90 |
| Personal Growth and Maturity | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 3.36 | 3.20 | 3.62 |
| AFS Year Program | 3.33 | 3.12 | 3.60 |
| Comparison Group | .75 | 2.07 | -1.63 |
| Self-Confidence | | | |
| AFS Short Program | 3.95 | 3.47 | 4.73 |
| AFS Year Program | 4.64 | 5.05 | 4.15 |
| Comparison Group | 4.18 | 4.71 | 3.22 |

*All comparison group respondents who did not travel abroad between the pre- and post-tests.

Non-Materialism. A change in personal values is reflected in the increases of AFS students in the variable named Non-Materialism. Returnees defined Non-Materialism as: "Ability to not place high value on material things; concern for spiritual fulfillment." (Another definition of non-materialism often used within AFS circles is: "The tendency to define one's worth and goals in terms of ideals instead of possessions.") This characteristic measures the development of values and ideals in an adolescent. In the comments the AFS students added to their Impact questionnaires, non-materialism was often mentioned. Typical comments were:

> "Living on a farm in France changed my material-possession outlook. They had less materialwise in France, but not less love."
>
> "It was so hard for me to come back to the United States. One thing I learned was that people here value material things more than people, friendships, etc. That is really sad to me."
>
> "I never, never imagined myself herding cows in the mountains of Iceland! I realized I was happier tending farm animals and squelching around the barn in muddy boots than with all my possessions in America."
>
> "While there, I learned what things are essential to bring happiness -- and not any of them are material."

The non-materialistic attitudes reported by the students differ from recent findings of U.C.L.A. psychologist Alexander Astin, reported in U.S. News and World Report, that document a trend toward materialism in young Americans in this decade.[6] While it should be remembered that the post-test responses were received in 1981 and 1982, and more recent returnees (or returnees from an earlier time) might respond differently, the trend for the AFS students is still considerably different from that reported for the comparison group students who remained in the U.S. during that time.

While the average increases shown by the AFSers in Non-Materialism are moderate, the comparison group respondents who had never been abroad show a **decrease** in this characteristic. AFS students themselves recognized this change; in their self-reports of their change in this characteristic, about one-third of all AFS students reported that their lives had changed "to a very great extent" while less than one-fifth of the comparison group respondents were so strong in their self-assessment.

Critical Thinking. In this study, Critical Thinking was defined as: "An inclination to be discriminating and skeptical of stereotypes; a tendency **not** to accept things as they appear on the surface." While stereotypes are emphasized in the definition, skepticism is emphasized in the anchor statements. For example, the low anchor at 9 points is the statement: "I accept any kind of believable statement without thinking twice about it." The high anchor (84 points) reads: "I

analyze people's motives and probe deeply into their thinking before believing what they have to say." Critical thinking often develops as a result of experience. While children are likely to accept any kind of believable statement, adults are more likely to question their first impressions because experience has taught them that things are not always what they seem to be. The question is whether an AFS experience accelerates the process by which people come to question their first impressions more than could be expected through normal maturation.

On the average, all respondents show some increase in Critical Thinking. Year and Short Program AFS students who had not previously been abroad show a significantly greater increase than the comparison group respondents who had never been abroad. However, among those repondents who had been abroad prior to applying for AFS, there are no significant differences between AFS and comparison groups in their average increase for this variable.

Exchange of Ideas. The AFS returnees who participated in the development of the Impact questionnaire seemed to feel that their homestay experience had contributed in some way to their intellectual growth. Exchange of Ideas is defined as: "Need for participation in intellectual discussions; desire to stimulate thinking in other people." The behavioral anchors written by the returnees for this characteristic did not display as much variation as in most of the other scales. The lowest anchor, at 43 points, was "I like to take part in discussions from time to time, but I never initiate discussions." The fact that this lowest anchor is in the middle of the scale might have discouraged respondents from rating themselves at any lower point, but the range of scores, both pre-test and post-test, was not unlike that found for the other sixteen variables examined here. The highest anchor statement, at 87 points, was:

> "I look for people with whom to talk seriously about a wide range of issues in order to broaden my horizons. I try to make people aware of problems and to talk with them about how those problems could be solved."

On this variable, Year Program students display the highest average change, but the scores of comparison group and Short Program respondents are nearly the same. None of the statistical tests that were conducted found any significant difference between the three groups in their average increase in Exchange of Ideas. The respondents' own perception of their change in this variable was somewhat different, however. In assessing the extent to which their lives had changed, both Year Program and Short Program students who had no previous travel abroad were much more inclined to see themselves as having changed in this respect than those in the comparison group who had no opportunity for travel abroad.

Independence--Responsibility for Self. For the returnees who helped devise the Impact questionnaire, Independence--Responsibility for Self related more to independent thinking than to an ability to live independently and support oneself. Their definition of this character-

istic was: "Ability to exercise self-control and to be self-directed; capacity to avoid being a conformist and to resist peer pressure." All four of the behavior anchor statements used in this scale relate to an ability to resist peer pressure and form one's own opinions. This characteristic is related to maturity and ego development. Loevinger notes that childhood is the stage of greatest conformity, and for adolescents, this means conformity to the peer group.[7] An AFS experience may contribute to an adolescent's ego development by removing him or her from the peer group and its pressures to conform. AFS students living in another country may be forced to rely on themselves to make personal decisions rather than simply following the crowd. Some written comments from the students in this sample indicate that they felt this happening. For example:

> ". . . I had always been concerned about what others thought of me and about how popular the people with whom I socialized were. Yet, after my French experience I am so much more content because I now have friends whose personal qualities I admire. . . . I have been doing what I like to do, not what seems to be the 'in' thing."
>
> "I used to be afraid to talk to certain people and felt it was important to follow the pattern with a 'group' at school, but now I have developed my own opinions."

Most adolescents eventually are freed from peer pressure, however, and the comments of these students may be more a reflection of their normal maturing process than specifically of their AFS participation. On the other hand, the comparison group respondents show a very slight decrease while AFS students show a small average increase. While this difference is not great, it is worth noting that among those who had no previous foreign travel experience, the average increase for those who became participants in AFS programs is significantly greater than the change (actually, a slight decrease) for those who did not become AFSers. The differences are most marked between the Year Program students and the comparison group respondents; taken alone, the average increase of the Short Program students is not significantly greater than that of the comparison group.

Paradoxically, Short Program students were the most likely to see themselves as having changed to a great or very great extent in their Independence--Responsibility for Self. They were much more likely to report great changes than either the Year Program or the comparison group students. So while the findings are somewhat confusing, it does seem that an intercultural homestay such as that offered by AFS may contribute to an increased ability to think independently and resist peer pressure. This may be evidence that adolescents are able to alter their old world view through the experience of living in a foreign environment.

Personal Growth and Maturity. One of the major challenges of a homestay in a foreign country is the one presented by the cultural values of the host society, which often conflict with those of the

sojourner. In **Maturity and Competence**, Douglas Heath suggests that "conflict in cultural values is a potent source of personality disruption that may spark maturing."[8] Living in another country and adapting to that culture is an experience that may well lead a person to question his or her assumptions and values, and this questioning process, it has been argued, leads to increased maturity. Personal Growth and Maturity was defined by the workshop returnees as: "An understanding of myself and of my strengths and weaknesses, and a determination to attempt to correct or compensate for my weaknesses." The behavioral anchors also stress the idea of self-awareness and self-improvement. Returnees who participated in the development of the questionnaire felt that the AFS experience had enabled them to know and accept themselves better, and to make changes in themselves. The high anchor (88 points) was the statement, "I am aware of my limits, accept my faults, and accordingly do whatever I can to make changes when necessary." At the low level, (8 points) the anchor statement read, "I don't recognize personal limitations and am therefore unadaptable in my approach to life." The mid-level anchor (52 points) gives a somewhat clearer idea of the characteristic being measured in this scale: "I seem to recognize many personal strong points, yet I tend to put on an act when I am insecure or in an unfamiliar situation."

While AFS students consistently show a moderate average increase of over three points in Personal Growth and Maturity and the comparison group shows less than one point average increase, statistical tests were unable to confirm that the difference in these increases was greater than what could have occurred by chance. This suggests that, while the AFS experience may help participants grow in this way, students who do not go abroad may encounter other life experiences that also help them mature and grow.

Self-Confidence. Self-Confidence was defined as: "Feelings of self-worth and of being sure of myself; aware, honest, and secure about myself and my relations with others; lack of self-consciousness." Self-confidence seems most likely to increase when a person successfully meets a number of challenges. While it is easy to argue that an AFS experience provides challenges, it is harder to claim that increased self-confidence is directly related to a homestay abroad. AFS students and comparison group respondents show very similar increases in Self-Confidence from pre-test to post-test. It is true that many of the AFS returnees felt that their self-confidence had increased as a result of their experiences in another country. Other returnees, however, reported that the homestay was difficult to the point of shaking their confidence to some degree. One boy reported: "The difficult times in my first host family did damage my confidence, and shook me up considerably, but now I feel that I am over these problems."

In any case, AFS students show sizeable increases in their Self-Confidence scores and are more likely than the comparison group respondents to recognize that they have increased in self-confidence. The AFSers are very likely to attribute increased self-confidence to their AFS experience. This is most true of those Short Program participants who had not traveled abroad prior to applying for AFS. In general, the

results suggest that students who participate in an AFS experience will, on the average, experience an increase in their self-confidence, but that such an increase is not uniquely associated with an intercultural homestay experience. Others of their age will also tend to increase in self-confidence from the various experiences they have while remaining in their own country.

**Summarizing Changes Associated With an AFS Homestay**

Of the seventeen variables in this study, four were found to be strongly associated with the AFS homestay; seven others also show a generally positive relationship. The four most positively associated with the homestay experiences are: (1) Understanding Other Cultures, (2) Awareness and Appreciation of Host Country and Culture, (3) Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability, and (4) International Awareness. These variables are related to two of AFS's goals for learning: Intercultural Knowledge and Sensitivity, and Global Issues-Awareness. All four variables reflect the students' increased knowledge and understanding of the world and its cultures.

Though not as strongly associated with the homestay experience as the four above, increases in Non-Materialism, Adaptability, Communication with Others, Independence--Responsibility for Self, Critical Thinking, Awareness of Opportunities, and Awareness and Appreciation of Home Country and Culture also appear to result from an AFS homestay abroad. In the case of six of these variables, significant differences between AFS and comparison students were found only among students with no prior experience traveling abroad, indicating perhaps that learning in these categories is greater with the initial exposure to a foreign environment. In the case of the seventh (Communication with Others), significant differences were only found among those students who had been abroad previously. Of these seven variables, four relate to the AFS goal of developing Personal Values and Skills, two relate to Interpersonal Relationship-Building, while the last relates to Intercultural Knowledge and Sensitivity.

On the other hand, this study found no association between six of the variables and the AFS experience. No statistically significant differences could be found between the average amount of change reported by AFS students and comparison group respondents in the following: Exchange of Ideas, High Standards for Personal Relationships, Personal Growth and Maturity, Open-Mindedness, Self-Confidence, and Appreciation of Own Family. (On this last item, the Year Program appears to be associated with significant increases but the Short Program clearly is not.) Although the actual pre- to post-test change scores for AFS students and comparison group respondents were similar on these six items, the AFS students were more likely than comparison group students to perceive a greater change in their lives with respect to Exchange of Ideas, Self-Confidence, and Open-Mindedness.

Few comparisons of Year and Short Program students show any significant differences in learning, but the few that do are particularly

noteworthy. Year Program students show significantly greater learning than Short Program students in their Awareness and Appreciation of Host Country and Culture and in their Foreign Language Appreciation and Ability. Since these are two of the variables most strongly associated with the homestay abroad, this suggests that there is a relationship between length of stay and intercultural learning. Year Program students also show a significantly greater increase in their Appreciation of Own Family, a characteristic in which neither Short Program nor comparison group respondents show much increase. On the other hand, Short Program students show significantly greater increases than Year Program students on two items: Adaptability and Understanding Other Cultures. Since these are self-rating scales, much of the difference here could reflect a greater feeling of certainty on the part of the shorter-term sojourners. Just as Pearce found that after a three-week package tour respondents tended to be highly certain of the correctness of the stereotypes they held, AFS students may feel quite confident about their knowledge and abilities with respect to these two items after a short time abroad.[9] The adjustment required for the Short Program is generally assumed to be less difficult than that required for the Year Program. Short Program students, as a result, may have greater **feelings** of success about their adjustment and learning. The higher scores here may reflect this. But on all other variables, it seems that the two-month and the year-long homestays offer roughly the same opportunities for learning.

It is important to remember that the learning documented here is not simply the result of travel abroad. AFS students are more than simple travelers; they are participants in the daily lives of the people of another culture. Many of the AFS students formed strong emotional attachments to their host countries, referring to these as their "other" or "second" home. Many reported readjustment difficulties and homesickness for the host country, as evidenced in the comments that follow.

> "I fell in love with the Colombian people and lifestyle."
>
> "I like to feel that I'm the luckiest person in the world: I have two countries to be my home and two families to call my own."
>
> "One of the hardest parts was coming home. Three weeks before I left Sri Lanka I became very depressed at the thought of leaving my wonderful family and country. Many times since I have wished I had gone there for a year. . . . Since I've been back in the U.S., I've been depressed very often due to homesickness for Sri Lanka."

For many of the AFS students, the sojourn abroad is a very emotional experience. As one student (a boy) remarked, it is "an experience that made me love, laugh, share, and cry." A few students who had particularly problematic experiences in their adjustment or with their host families gave very bitter comments, such as the remark of one girl who said, "My experience taught me never to trust anyone!!!" But, on

the whole, the comments of the AFS returnees are positive. Sentiment runs high; for example, a student stated that she now feels "a strong desire to reach out to my family and fellow man, offering my time, heart, and my hands in various deeds of generosity." Other students reported taking new pleasure in simple things, such as "the true wealth of good simple times with friends and family." The idealism and emotionalism of the returnees is reflected in many of their responses and in the wording of many questionnaire scales and anchor statements. To some extent, this may be typical of adolescents, yet AFS students show significantly higher increases on such values as Non-Materialism than are shown by respondents in the comparison group, and their comments frequently indicate that they attribute increases in altruism and idealism to the AFS experience.

These sorts of comments would be surprising from participants on a sightseeing tour. A sightseer rarely becomes involved with the people in the country visited. Immersion in another culture, however, demands emotional involvement in that culture. It demands building and maintaining relationships with others in that culture. This emotional involvement and these relationships are the distinguishing characteristics of the AFS experience, the ones that seem to be the essential ingredient in the learning that takes place.

It is clear that the AFS students learned things that a tourist could not. While many of the students may have seen famous sights while in their host country, none mentioned this as an outcome of their experience. Instead they mentioned language learning, learning about their host country and about world affairs, learning about their own country and its role in the world, building relationships with others around the world, and learning how to cope and survive in another environment.

**Note 1** (pertaining to Table 1, page 4): Averages reported in Tables 2 through 5 sometimes vary from the averages reported in Table 1. These variations occur because different statistical procedures were used in calculating the subsequent tables, which in some cases caused additional individual cases to be discarded as "missing." Also, comparison group respondents who traveled abroad after completing the pre-test were eliminated from analyses subsequent to the one performed for Table 1.

## Notes

[1]P.C. Smith and L.M. Kendall, "Retranslation of Expectations: An Approach to the Construction of Unambiguous Anchors for Rating Scales," **Journal of Applied Psychology**, Vol. 47 (1963), pp. 149-55.

[2]Bettina G. Hansel, **The Impact of a Sojourn Abroad: A Study of Secondary School Students Participating in a Foreign Exchange Program.** Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1985. Distributed by University Microfilms of Ann Arbor, Michigan (Order number 8603764).

[3]Gordon Murray, "Views on Cross-Cultural Learning," in Donald Batchelder and Elizabeth G. Warner, eds., **Beyond Experience: The Experiential Approach to Cross-Cultural Education** (Brattleboro, VT: The Experiment Press, 1977), pp. 37-40.

[4]Sidney Werkman, "The Psychological Effects of Moving and Living Overseas," **Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychology**, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1981), pp. 645-57.

[5]Judith Martin, "The Impact of a Homestay Abroad on Relationships at Home," **Occasional Papers in Intercultural Learning**, No. 8 (1985).

[6]Astin, who conducts an annual survey of college freshmen, is quoted as finding "'a meteoric rise' in the number of students who list being well off financially as a top priority." Similar findings from others dealing with college students are also reported in this article, "America's Youth in Search of a Cause," **U.S. News and World Report**, April 16, 1984 (Vol. 96), pp. 31 ff.

[7]As quoted in Arthur W. Chickering, "Developmental Change as a Major Outcome," in Morris T. Keeton and Associates, eds., **Experiential Learning: Rationale, Characteristics, and Assessment** (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1976), pp. 66-69.

[8]Douglas H. Heath, **Maturity and Competence: A Trans-cultural View** (New York: Gardner Press, 1977), p. 198.

[9]Philip L. Pearce, "Tourists and Their Hosts: Some Sociological and Psychological Effects of Inter-Cultural Contact," in Stephen Bochner, ed., **Cultures in Contact** (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982).

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